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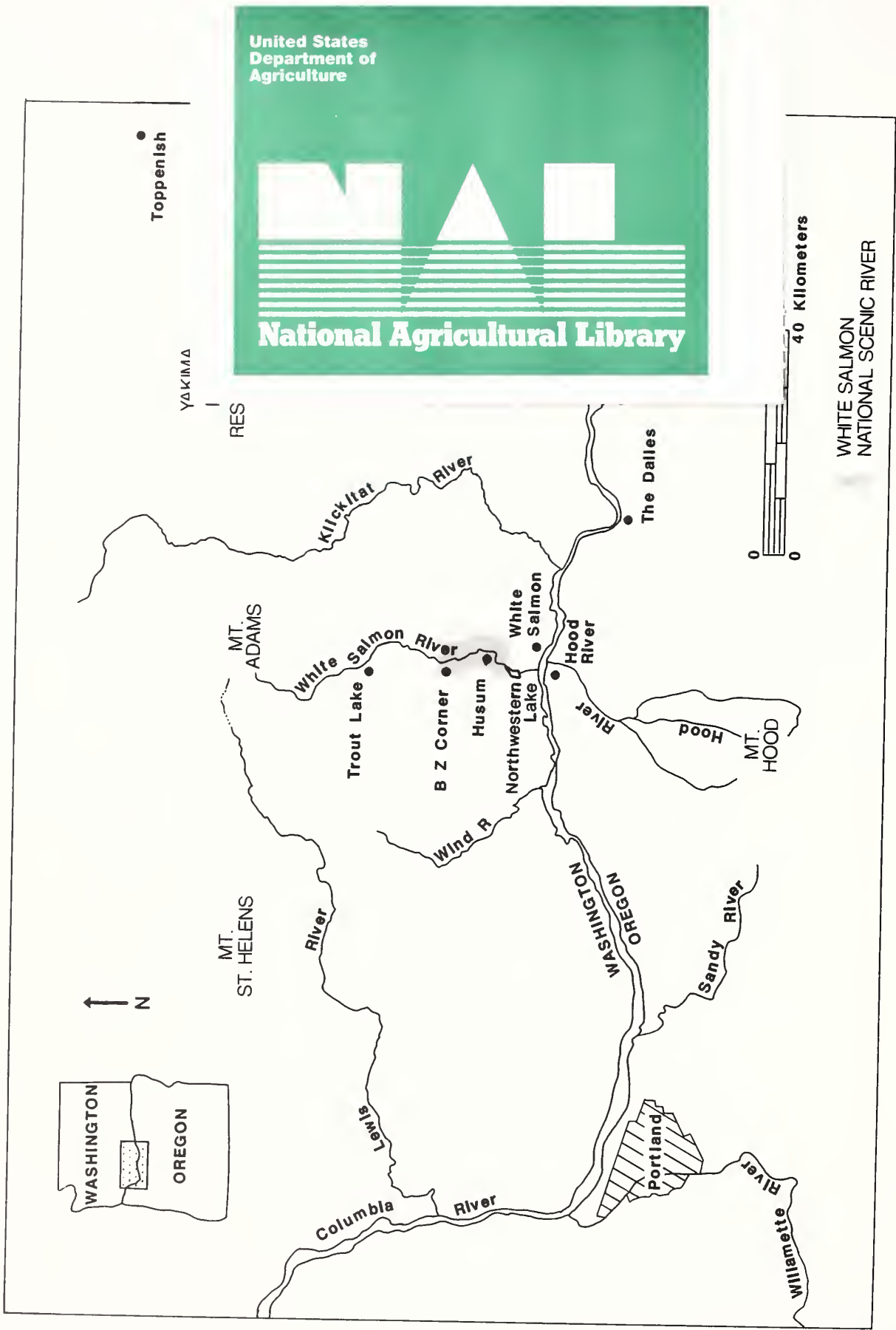
LOWER WHITE SALMON

National Wild and Scenic River
Management Plan

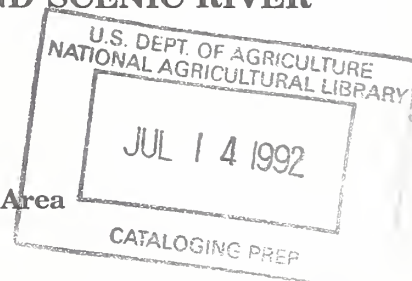


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White Salmon National Scenic River and Vicinity

RECORD OF DECISION**LOWER WHITE SALMON NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER
MANAGEMENT PLAN****Klickitat County, Washington****USDA Forest Service
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area****1. INTRODUCTION**

The segment of the White Salmon River located between Buck Creek (river mile 5) and Gilmer Creek (river mile 12.7) was designated a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System in 1986 (see vicinity map on facing page).

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that the administering agency (in this case the Forest Service) must establish detailed boundaries for the designated segment of the river and its adjacent and related land area, and prepare a comprehensive management plan to provide for the protection of the river values.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the lower White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan documents the results of the analysis of alternatives for managing the designated segment of the river, including the effects of each alternative. This Record of Decision (ROD) states which alternative is being selected, compares the selected alternative with the other alternatives, and provides a rationale for the decision. This document establishes the final boundaries for the designated segment of the White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River and adopts a plan for management of the area within those boundaries. The management plan is designed to protect and enhance the river's values.

This Plan does not deal with the administrative activities necessary to carry out the Plan, such as personnel matters, law enforcement, internal organizational requirements, etc. Instead, it describes the conditions which need to be achieved and/or maintained in order to protect the river's values, prescribes standards and guidelines to govern activities within the boundaries that could affect the river's values. It also proposes a schedule of activities which are needed to achieve the desired conditions and establishes a program for monitoring activities within the area to be sure that management direction is followed and the desired results are achieved.

Although the Plan establishes standards and guidelines for activities that can be accomplished from a physical, biological, economic, social, and legal perspective, accomplishment will depend on budget allocations. If budget allocations are insufficient, activities proposed in the Plan may need to be rescheduled. Insufficient budgets over a period of several years could cause an inability to implement proposed activities, to apply standards and guidelines, and to achieve some of the desired conditions.

The Plan provides overall direction for managing the designated 7.7 miles of the river. It does not make site-specific decisions. Such decisions will require site-specific environmental analyses which could result in categorical exclusions, environmental assessments, and, possibly, changes in the plan.

The Plan will be revised no later than 15 years from the date of this ROD. However, it may be revised earlier if conditions warrant. Catastrophic events, new direction from Congress, new information,

unanticipated changes in conditions, significantly lower budgets than anticipated, or major new technologies could create a need to change the Plan. If the needed change is significant, the Plan will be revised through preparation of another EIS. If the change does not significantly affect the Plan, the National Scenic Area manager could amend it by a less extensive procedure, but still with public participation.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

An extensive public involvement program has been carried out to ensure that the planning process addresses the concerns of landowners, local residents, the Yakima Indian Nation, Klickitat County, the State of Washington, and others having a stake in how the river is managed.

Public Meetings - Initial public meetings were held in October 1987, to provide information to the public and receive comments on their concerns. Another scoping meeting was held in November 1988, and a public meeting was held in December 1989 to explain and receive comments on the range of alternatives. A final public meeting was held in September 1990, to receive comments on the Draft EIS.

Task Force - A broad-based public Task Force was created early in 1989. Task Force members included about 20 private and agency representatives from a wide range of local and regional interests concerned about the future of the river. The Task Force met a number of times between March and November of 1989 to help identify issues, determine the significance of river resources, develop and refine management alternatives, and identify the effects of the alternatives. They were to keep their fellow interest group members informed about the planning process. After the public comments on the Draft EIS were analyzed, the Task Force met again throughout the winter of 1990-1991 to help develop a recommended alternative.

Mailings - Announcements of Task Force meetings, copies of Task Force meeting notes, and newsletters were mailed to a list of approximately 175 individuals, agencies, and groups to be sure these other interests were kept informed of the planning process. Newsletters were also mailed to approximately 1,600 other people, including all those owning land along the White Salmon and Klickitat Rivers. An initial mailing of the Draft EIS was sent to the Task Force, 27 federal agencies, and about 500 other individuals and groups during July 1990.

Issues - The following issues were identified during the public involvement process:

Boundaries - Exactly what land will be included within the boundaries?

Administration - What agency will be responsible for administering the Wild and Scenic River area?

Land Acquisition - How will private property rights be affected? What role will the Federal government play in acquiring private lands? What will be the Federal government's attitude toward using condemnation, and how would private property owners be compensated?

Water Quality and Quantity - Will water quality be protected? How will water rights be affected? Will there be enough water for whitewater boating?

Stream Character - Will existing irrigation intake structures be allowed to stay? Will new ones be allowed? Will woody debris be removed from the rivers, and under what circumstances?

Fisheries - How will resident fisheries be protected? Will anadromous fish be reintroduced into the White Salmon River?

Biological Diversity - Is biological diversity an outstandingly remarkable value? How much protection will be given to biological diversity, specifically Oregon white oak stands?

Cultural Resources - What level of inventories will be done to discover cultural resources? How much protection will be given to cultural resources?

Recreation - What type of whitewater recreation experiences will be provided? Will whitewater boating use be limited, and if so, will a permit system be required? How will commercial guiding be controlled? What other recreation opportunities and facilities will be provided?

Landscape Character - How will the scenery along the river and Highway 141 be managed?

Land Uses - How will private lands within the boundary be affected?

Comments on the Draft EIS - In response to the Draft EIS, 137 letters or cards were received with comments from the public and various county, state, and federal agencies. The formal comment period ended September 14, 1990. The written comments, as well as verbal comments received at the September 1990 public meeting, were analyzed and considered, and as a result, many changes were made in the Final EIS, including the development of the Preferred Alternative. See Appendix D, in the Final EIS, for a detailed display of the comments received on the Draft EIS, and Forest Service responses to these comments.

3. DECISION AND RATIONALE

Based on the analysis of the alternatives in the Final EIS, it is my decision to select Alternative 6, the Preferred Alternative, and adopt its associated management plan. Alternative 6 was developed based on comments received on the Draft EIS and discussions with the Task Force. Many of its features are part of the other alternatives, and it is within the overall range of alternatives included in the Draft EIS.

One of the key pieces of direction for preparation of a management plan for a National Wild and Scenic River is found in Sec. 10 (a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It says that "Each component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values....Management plans for any such component may establish varying degrees of intensity for its protection and development, based on the special attributes of the area." This means that the management plan must strike a balance between the following two directions:

1. Protect the river's outstandingly remarkable (OR) values and other values identified in the Act, and
2. Allow the public to use and enjoy the river's values, as long as these uses are consistent with protection and enhancement of the river's values, and private property rights are protected.

The public and the Task Force previously came up with a number of values associated with the river that they felt should be evaluated for "outstandingly remarkable" determination. Using the criteria of **unique** in the area (compared with other rivers in the region) and **exemplary** (an outstanding example among other examples occurring with the region), the following characteristics were identified as "outstandingly remarkable" (OR) values.

- Resident fisheries
- Whitewater recreation
- Hydrology of the river
- Geology of the canyon
- American Indian cultural sites

When the White Salmon River was designated, all the land along the river was privately owned. The planning team was challenged to strike a balance between adequately protecting and enhancing river values while not restricting uses of private land any more than needed. Most comments received on the Draft EIS and the discussions of the task force supported one or the other of these two directions.

I believe that Alternative 6 best meets the intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for a "Scenic" river by maintaining the current character of the river area and providing long-term protection and enhancement of its OR values, without unduly limiting other uses, including private lands, that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of the river's values.

Following is a summary of the key aspects of Alternative 6, organized to show how the decision responds to the issues raised during the planning process. Included is the rationale for why the decision was made. For the complete details of Alternative 6 and the Management Plan, see Chapter II and Appendix E of the Final EIS.

Boundaries

Decision - The adopted boundaries are very similar to the boundaries established in December 1989, with some minor additions and deletions. The total area within the adopted boundaries is 1,874 acres - 7 acres less than the existing boundaries - an average of 244 acres per mile of river.

Rationale - The boundary issue has been contentious throughout the planning process (see the discussion on Boundaries in the section on Issues in Chapter I of the Final EIS). The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act says that a river area "eligible to be included in the system is a free-flowing stream and the related adjacent land area" that possesses one or more outstandingly remarkable value. To give an indication of what is meant by "adjacent land area," the Act sets a maximum amount of land which can be included within the final boundaries - "an average of not more than 320 acres of land per mile...on both sides of the river." This is an average of ¼ mile from the river on each side.

In most places, the adopted boundary is less than ¼ mile from the river. Location of the boundary is based primarily on the following criteria:

- * Include all the land needed to adequately protect and enhance the river's outstandingly remarkable values.
- * Include enough land adjacent to the river to maintain the existing predominantly natural appearance of the riverside.
- * Include adjacent land containing primary stands of Oregon white oak and which provide scarce mature vegetation communities,
- * Avoid including any more land than is needed so that private land uses which do not adversely affect the river's values are not restricted.
- * To either be easily recognizable on the ground (such as along Highway 141), or conform with standard practices for the division of lands (so they can be accurately surveyed on the ground).

The boundary extends beyond $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the river in the following places:

- Spring Creek, to protect a portion of a major tributary and allow for additional river-related recreation.
- Rattlesnake Creek, to protect an outstandingly remarkable cultural resources.
- The northeast corner, to maintain Oregon white oak stands and mature forest habitat, has been extended to about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile.

There has been pressure to extend the boundary in the northeast corner even farther from the river (beyond $\frac{1}{2}$ mile). This would include additional stands of Oregon white oak and additional mature vegetative communities for their value as habitat for the numerous important wildlife and plant species, as well as to maintain the overall biodiversity of the area. This additional area is not included in the final river boundary because:

- The resources which, in some cases, are beyond $\frac{1}{2}$ mile are not river-related, and, therefore, protection of these resources does not fall within the intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act,
- The vegetative communities known to be located in the extended area, while particularly good examples, do not add any new components of biological diversity that are not already included, to some degree, within the boundary,
- SDS Lumber Company, the owner of the lands included in the expansion proposal, has agreed to a land exchange with the Forest Service for all its lands within the adopted boundary (about 725 acres). This land exchange is a crucial component of the selected alternative because much of it is contiguous to the river. SDS Lumber Company is strongly opposed to further boundary expansion in this area.

In summary, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is intended to protect and enhance the river-related values and, particularly, the river's outstandingly remarkable values. The adopted boundary provides sufficient protection and enhancement of these values, includes enough land adjacent to the river to maintain natural riverside appearance, and includes representative white oak/mature conifer habitat. Exclusion of this added area will not adversely affect the values for which the river was designated.

However, the Forest Service recognizes that the habitat values of the mixed conifer/white oak stands in the area proposed for expansion are important. For this reason, we have encouraged SDS Lumber Company to make special efforts to protect these values. SDS has responded with a commitment to recognize and protect the oldest oaks on that part of their ownership. The Forest Service will work with the Washington Department of Wildlife and SDS Lumber Company to develop appropriate agreements for the purpose of protecting these oak stands, including consideration of conservation easements.

A 100-foot wide area on each side of Rattlesnake Creek, located in the northeast corner of Section 30 and running parallel to the creek for approximately two-thirds of a mile, was included in the 1989 boundary. This was included at that time because of a strong interest expressed by the environmental community to protect Rattlesnake Canyon from future logging and possible hydro power development. This portion is now removed because:

- * Rattlesnake Creek is a "protected" area under the Northwest Power Planning Council's protected area program. The intent of this designation is to preclude new hydro power development as a means of rebuilding fish and wildlife populations.
- * Even though this area would not be within the boundary, Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides protection against hydro power development that would have a direct and adverse effect on the White Salmon River, immediately downstream from Rattlesnake Creek.

- * The stretch is privately owned, and the landowners strongly object to being in the boundary.
- * Both the Washington State Forest Practices Act and the Shorelines Act, as well as the recently updated (April 1990) Klickitat County Shorelines Master Plan, restrict development and timber harvesting within this area.

The total acreage within the boundary is less than is authorized in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1,874 acres compared with 2,464 acres). This reflects the fact that almost all of the land presently is privately owned, and no more than that is needed to protect OR values and meet the other criteria stated above.

Administration

Decision - Administration will be by the Forest Service in close consultation with Klickitat County, the State of Washington, and a Task Force representing the interests which are concerned about management of the river.

Rationale - Sec. 11.(b)(1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act says that "...the Secretary of Agriculture...shall assist, advise, and cooperate with States or their political subdivisions, landowners, private organizations, or individuals to plan, protect, and manage river resources." Based on this direction, the Forest Service established the Task Force, which helped so much in developing the Management Plan, and will establish a similar task force with which to consult during implementation of the plan.

Land Acquisition

Decision - A key decision is that the Federal government will acquire, through exchange, all lands within the boundary owned by SDS Lumber Company. This is more than 700 acres, amounting to almost 40% of the land within the boundary. This land will be managed primarily to protect existing biological diversity, especially stands of Oregon white oak, to increase the amount of vegetative communities that are in late successional stages within the boundary, to protect the scenery along large portions of the riverfront, and to provide low intensity recreation in the form of a few interpretive trails and river accessed picnic areas.

Rationale - One of the highly contested items in the planning process has been whether biological diversity is an OR value. There is not enough scientific information for a judgment. However, biological diversity in the White Salmon River Valley is recognized as being above ordinary, and the decision has been made to manage federal land within the boundary as if biological diversity is an OR value.

Since the majority of land within the boundary is in early to middle successional stages (much of it in agricultural fields or orchards), protection of biological diversity has been focused on retaining and creating late successional stages on the remaining timber lands. SDS Lumber Company is the primary landowner within the boundary (about 40%) and most of their land is commercial timberland managed for the production of wood products. To adequately protect biological diversity on those lands through the acquisition of scenic easements would have been very difficult, and the amount of control the Federal government would have had over their management operations was unacceptable to SDS. Therefore, the agreement with SDS Lumber Company to enter into a three-way exchange of SDS land, federal land, and state land is considered a key aspect of this plan. This would convert all SDS land within the boundary to the National Forest System.

Decision - Since the exchange with SDS Lumber Company would bring the amount of land acquired in fee to almost the full amount authorized in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Forest Service will request Congress to increase the authorization for acquisition of fee title along the White Salmon River from 100 acres per river mile to 150 acres per mile.

Rationale - The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act limits the amount of land to which fee title can be acquired to 100 acres per mile of river. This amounts to a total of 770 acres which can be acquired along the White Salmon River. Since the SDS property is over 700 acres, and the Forest Service has already acquired about 55 acres within the boundary, there is only a very small amount of land remaining within the authorization for which fee title could be acquired. In order to be able to acquire fee title to land if needed for future recreation developments, or to respond to landowners who are willing to sell fee title to key parcels of land, but not scenic easements, Congress will be requested to authorize the additional acreage for acquisition of fee title.

Decision - The Forest Service will not use condemnation to acquire scenic easements on, or fee title to, private lands unless that is necessary, as a last resort after all other measures have failed, and then only to prevent imminent, serious, adverse effects to the river area.

Rationale - The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act does not restrict use of condemnation for fee title unless 50% or more of the land within a wild and scenic river boundary is publicly owned, and does not restrict condemnation of scenic easements at all. However, the Forest Service has very seldom used condemnation to acquire lands for wild and scenic river purposes in recent years, and will attempt to negotiate, using condemnation only as a last resort. One of the strongest fears of the landowners is that the Federal government will take over their land and make them move. Since successful implementation of this plan requires a good bit of cooperation from the local landowners, it makes sense to dispell those fears by putting onto paper a policy that exists, but is unwritten.

Water Quality and Quantity

Decision - Existing Washington State processes will be used, if possible, to assure that instream flows are maintained at current levels and water quality is not degraded. If improvement of existing water quality is necessary, it will be done through a technical assistance program.

Rationale - The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act states that the United States needs "...a policy that would preserve other selected rivers...to protect the water quality of such rivers...." In addition the Clean Water Act establishes an "anti-degradation" policy on all National Wild and Scenic Rivers. Washington State currently has a "non-degradation" regulation for these same rivers, under which the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) has the responsibility and authority to maintain current water quality within the Lower White Salmon River. The Forest Service will coordinate with and assist the DOE, as well as the Underwood Conservation District, in establishing an adequate water monitoring and enforcement program.

Whitewater boating is one of the OR values of the White Salmon River. One reason for that determination is that the river's flows are sustained throughout the boating season. Although currently the water levels drop significantly by the end of the summer, there is still enough water for boats to navigate the river. However, if the flows were to drop more than they presently do, it would be very difficult

for boats, especially rafts, to float the river safely. Since OR values must be protected and enhanced it is necessary to, at least, maintain the current level of instream flows.

Stream Character

Decision - New water structures may be built if they do not adversely affect river values. Through a technical assistance program, owners will be encouraged to reduce the impact of existing structures which adversely affect river values. Large woody debris will be left in the channel to improve fish habitat unless it causes a safety problem for boaters or seriously threatens landowners' property.

Rationale - The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the interagency guidelines state that designated rivers should maintain their free-flowing character and streambanks in essentially their current or more natural states. Fisheries and whitewater recreation were both determined to be outstandingly remarkable values within the lower White Salmon River and need to be protected and/or enhanced. Therefore, there needs to be a balance between debris retention (for the enhancement of fish habitat and water quality) and debris removal (to maintain safe river-running conditions).

Fisheries

Decision - The Forest Service will work closely with the State of Washington to monitor fish populations, develop fish protection projects, and adopt strong fish harvest regulations in order to protect resident fish populations.

Rationale - Resident fish is one of the OR values of the designated portion of the White Salmon River. As such, the Forest Service must do what it can to protect and enhance it. However, the Forest Service does not have authority to manage fish populations. The Washington Department of Wildlife has the authority to manage resident fish populations in the State of Washington. Since both the state and Federal government are vitally interested in the fishery in the White Salmon River, a cooperative effort to protect that fishery is in order.

Decision - The Forest Service will provide input into the Condit Dam relicensing project to assure that wild and scenic river values are protected.

Rationale - There was substantial feeling from the public that the Wild and Scenic River planning should address the relicensing of Condit Dam, especially regarding reintroduction of anadromous fish to the White Salmon River. Since the decision about whether or not to reintroduce anadromous fish is not one that can be made in this planning process, this issue was dropped from consideration. However, we fully recognize that reintroduction and other decisions made as part of the Condit relicensing project could have a substantial effect on the wild and scenic segment of the White Salmon River. Therefore, the Forest Service will participate in the relicensing project by identifying effects on the White Salmon River and making recommendations.

Biological Diversity

Decision - The same level of biological diversity which presently exists within the boundary will be maintained or enhanced by protecting habitats for known populations of species on the Region 6 Sensitive Species List (SSL), maintaining and enhancing mature and

overmature plant communities, and protecting specifically identified plant communities such as riparian habitat, canyon ecosystems, and wetlands.

Rationale - Protecting habitats of known species on the Region 6 Sensitive Species List is a combination of federal law and Forest Service policy.

Although a large percentage of the people who responded to the Draft EIS expressed the opinion that biological diversity in the White Salmon River Valley is an outstandingly remarkable value, it is not presently possible to make that determination due to the lack of scientific information. However, based on what is presently known of the White Salmon River, many experts in the field suspect that once the information is gathered, biological diversity will be found to be outstandingly remarkable. To be prepared for such a finding, and because it is presently acknowledged that the biotic communities in this area are important anyway, the areas most likely to be richest in plant and animal communities will be protected. In addition, because late successional stages are not well represented in the area, and management practices in the surrounding private land may result in almost all of it being in early to middle successional stages, management of federal lands in this area will be focused on maintaining and increasing the acreage of mature and overmature vegetation communities.

Decision - Oregon white oak communities will be perpetuated using vegetation management if necessary.

Rationale - Oregon white oak has been identified by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources as a "critical" wildlife community warranting special management consideration. The boundary in the northeast corner has been extended beyond ¼ mile in part to include important stands of white oak. Part of the problem in much of the White Salmon Valley is that conifers eventually will overtop the oak, cut off the sunlight, which eventually will kill the oak. If the white oak stands within the boundary are to survive, some form of vegetative management, which could include harvesting some conifers, will probably be necessary.

Decision - On lands on which a population of species on the Region 6 Sensitive Species List is likely to be present, an inventory will be performed, prior to ground disturbing activities, to discover any such species. On lands owned by the Federal government, or on which the Federal government holds a scenic easement, biological inventories will be performed as soon as possible.

Rationale - Early inventories of federal lands, or lands where the Federal government has acquired a scenic easement, will help determine what components of biological diversity are present and will provide the basis for developing plans on managing the biotic communities to protect and enhance biological diversity. It also will identify the presence of any population of species on the Region 6 Sensitive Species List. On private lands within the boundary, identifying these populations prior to any development will allow the Forest Service time to negotiate with the landowner to try to secure protection of the population and to coordinate with state or federal agencies charged with their protection.

Decision - Studies will be done in order to determine whether biological diversity is an outstandingly remarkable value of the wild and scenic river area.

Rationale - Additional scientific information is needed to determine whether biological diversity is an outstandingly remarkable value of the wild and scenic river area. Since the determination of OR value is a Forest Service responsibility, the Forest Service will sponsor those studies through the State of Washington and appropriate universities.

Cultural Resources

Decision - A comprehensive oral history and archival inventory will be compiled of all sites within the entire White Salmon River valley. On-the-ground surveys will be performed on all public lands within the boundary, and on high-probability private lands in response to project proposals. Sites with a high probability of being significant will be protected through acquisition if necessary.

Rationale - Due to the lack of any systematic oral history or archival research within the White Salmon River valley, there is no central repository of information relating to the prehistoric or historic settlement and use of the area. Ethnographic information on the Indian use and history of the area is curated at a number of libraries and collections within and outside of the state. Historic data, including records of settlement and history of the valley are also found in a number of places. There is a pressing need to conduct oral history interviews to preserve the Indian and non-Indian living memory of the inhabitants of the valley.

In a similar fashion, there has been no systematic and comprehensive on-the-ground inventory of historic and prehistoric cultural resources within the valley. Without this inventory, it is not possible to reliably evaluate the significance of individual cultural properties that are encountered. This lack of a comprehensive inventory results in the risk of inadequately evaluating individual historic or prehistoric sites, and could result in the loss of sole-remaining examples of cultural properties.

In order to protect cultural resource sites located on private land within the boundary, the Forest Service will pay for cultural resource inventories conducted on private lands. If the site is significant enough to warrant protection, the Forest Service will compensate the owner for loss of development opportunities, or will negotiate to acquire the property.

Recreation

Decision - The recreation experience on the river will be managed to maintain low to moderate perceptions of crowding in a physical setting of moderate to high levels of naturalness and isolation along the river. Although only one launch site provides public access, no new launch sites will be added. An adequate takeout facility will be provided at the head of Northwestern Lake.

Rationale - The law requires that moderate to high levels of naturalness along the river will be maintained. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act describes "scenic rivers" as "Those rivers or segments of rivers...with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads." Guidelines established by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior (National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; Final Revised Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification, and Management of River Areas, September 7, 1982) say that "Largely primitive means that the shorelines and the immediate river environment still present an overall natural character....activity is accomplished without a substantial adverse effect on the natural appearance of the river or its immediate environment."

That perceptions of crowding should be maintained at low to moderate levels is largely a professional judgement based on the following factors:

- * A sense that such conditions are an integral part of the current whitewater boating experience which is an OR value.
- * A general consensus by the public that the river can stand more use than it currently receives, but should not reach the level of use currently experienced on the Deschutes River.
- * An indication from surveys of White Salmon River users that boats from other parties should not be seen more than 25% of the time during a river trip.

Limiting the number of launch sites will help avoid crowding. Thus, it is believed that one launch site is adequate to maintain a desirable level of river use. An adequate takeout facility is also necessary to prevent boaters from bunching up at the end of the trip and feeling crowded at that time.

Decision - Limit the number of commercial special use permits to ten, based on historical use, performance and geographic distribution. If, when the Plan is approved, there are more than ten guides/outfitters under permit, limit the number of permits to that total with the intent of reducing the total number to ten through attrition. Until the target number of ten permits is reached through attrition, permits will not be transferred when a permittee chooses to relinquish a permit for whatever reason.

Rationale - Ten commercial special use permits were issued during 1990, the first year special use permits were required. Another 11 guides reportedly operated without permits. In 1991, the number of commercial special use permits increased to 14. Of the guides who obtained or applied for special use permits in 1991, three live near the White Salmon River, six are located in the Seattle/Tacoma area, four are located in the Portland/Vancouver area, three are located in the Eugene/Springfield area, and two are located in eastern Washington.

The three local guides account for at least two to three times as much use as any of the other guides, and, together, account for about 80 percent of the total commercial use. Based on 1991 estimates, five of the guides who are not local provide 3/4 of the remaining commercial use. Given this background, ten outfitter/guides is an adequate number to provide for commercial use on the White Salmon River. Ten permittees may be more than is needed, but the concern is to provide for an adequate geographic distribution of guides to serve the local, drop-in needs, as well as the larger urban areas in Washington and Oregon.

Decision - A permit system *will not* be established to limit the total number of boats on the river unless crowding conditions become unacceptable, and there is no other way to maintain acceptable conditions. Then, some form of "freedom of choice" permit system will be established.

Rationale - The issue of limits on the amount of whitewater boating use is one which caused a great deal of discussion and disagreement during the planning process. There was nearly unanimous sentiment against establishing a permit system for this day-use river. Since access is so limited due to depth and steepness of the gorge, it seems possible to control the flow of boaters through the launch point. Given the feelings against a permit system, the fact that this is a day-use river, and the potential for controlling use at the launch point, this is the preferred approach for resolving this problem.

It is expected that the amount of use may need to be limited on certain days during the busiest part of the season. A study is being conducted to determine at what point limits may be needed.

Decision - Provide additional recreation facilities to assure adequate parking, sanitation, and picnicking at the put-in and take-out areas at BZ Corner, Husum, and Northwestern Lake. Develop two boat-in picnic sites, one between BZ Corner and Husum, and the other between Husum and Northwestern Lake. Develop interpretive trails in appropriate locations on federal land (the "40", and Spring Creek if that becomes federally owned). These trails should not provide access to the river. The Forest Service will coordinate with Washington State and Klickitat County in the development of a bicycle trail along Highway 141 between BZ Corner and Husum.

Rationale - Most of the facilities called for in the plan are associated with whitewater boating needs. Parking, sanitation, and picnic areas will be provided at boating put-ins and take-outs for the convenience of boaters, as well as other visitors. This should restrict any damage to resources to these areas, and limit impacts on private land to a minimum. The interpretive trails and bicycle trail are a recognition that other low-intensity recreation opportunities can and should be provided in this area, but should not interfere with the feelings of solitude and the natural setting currently enjoyed on the river.

Landscape Character

Decision - Outside the rural centers of BZ Corner and Husum, a 200-foot wide buffer of generally undisturbed natural vegetation will be established on each side of the river. The buffer in BZ Corner will extend from the river to a point 20-feet beyond the rim of the gorge (but not exceeding 200-feet). In Husum, the buffer will be 100-feet wide on each side of the river. Existing uses within the buffer may continue, but no new residential or commercial development, or new agricultural or forestry activities can take place.

Rationale - One of the main reasons for a buffer is to assure that the degree of naturalness intended in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is maintained. Field observations determined that where the vegetation along the river has been undisturbed for many years, 200-feet is generally adequate to visually screen any activities beyond that distance. There are places where the depth of the gorge makes it impossible to see anything which occurs more than a few feet from the rim of the gorge. Due to this, a variable width buffer based on topographic and vegetative screening was considered. However, this was rejected because people on the Task Force felt that it would be better to specify a distance to allow landowners to know what to expect when the plan is adopted.

The buffer also serves as a corridor for movement of wildlife along the river. However, since wildlife tend to avoid the rural centers in preference for land between the developed areas, allowing a buffer less than 200-feet in the rural centers is not expected to negatively impact wildlife. Also, the fact that there is existing development in these rural centers should lead river users to accept some additional visible development in these areas.

The additional resource protection on private lands within this buffer zone would be accomplished by the Forest Service acquiring scenic easements from the landowners and providing compensation at the fair market value, or by voluntary compliance or donations of easements by individual landowners.

Land Uses

Decision - Allow agriculture and forest uses to continue, according to state and country regulations, outside BZ Corner, Husum, the buffer, and federally-owned land.

Rationale - The Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior guidelines say that "Agricultural and forestry practices should be similar in nature and intensity to those present in the area at the time of designation....Rowcrop production and timber harvest may be practiced in recreational and scenic river areas....Timber harvest in any river area will be conducted so as to avoid adverse impacts on the river area values."

Once the exchange with SDS Lumber Company is completed, almost 1,000 acres of land will be within the river buffers or under federal ownership and would be managed or controlled through scenic easements to meet the goals of the management plan. It is also assumed that Congress will approve fee title purchase of several hundred additional acres within the boundary, if needed to meet the management goals. The remaining acreage located within the boundary includes agricultural fields and orchards, forests or non-agricultural openings, grass/shrub lands, buildings and associated driveways, yards, etc. The goals of the management plan can best be met where lands are under federal ownership, or are within the buffer, and it is not anticipated that many areas critical to meeting the goals will be found outside these categories. The remaining acreage of timber is mostly in small plots (with one exception along Oak Ridge Road, which has been highly disturbed). These small plots are spread throughout the area and belong to a number of different owners. Therefore, allowing continued agricultural uses and forestry practices that comply with existing standards should not adversely affect any of the river values.

Decision - Limit new housing development to a density of one new dwelling unit per 20 acres. An exception can be made on existing, subdivided lots where one residence may be built on lots that are less than 20 acres. Concentrate new development on the least productive five percent of the land. Temporary exceptions to these density requirements may be made in certain hardship cases, ie., a mobile home moved onto the property to house an ill dependent, or temporary housing while a permanent residence is being built. In BZ Corner and Husum, residential and commercial development will be limited to a density of two units per acre unless a community sewer system is built and then it will be four units per acre.

Rationale - The Secretaries' guidelines say that, "Existing patterns of land use and ownership should be maintained, provided they remain consistent with the purposes of the Act." Some of the conditions that many people in the White Salmon River valley value are the rural lifestyle and pastoral scenery. These conditions are dependent on retaining lands suitable for agricultural and forestry uses. A significant threat to these conditions in years to come will be the demand for residences and vacation homes. Although a bit more restrictive, the type of limits on housing development included in this Plan are based on the limits contained in the Klickitat County Zoning Ordinance.

Other factors which led to the setting of housing density limits are: the risk of ground water pollution from septic systems, which could lead to pollution of the White Salmon River, and the concern that too many residences in the area outside the buffer could lead to a loss of the existing feelings of solitude and naturalness along the river.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The following alternatives were developed after considerable public involvement and discussion with the Task Force. The process included brainstorming a range of solutions to each of the issues, and then synthesizing appropriate individual issue solutions into full alternatives. These alternatives are

reasonably consistent internally, yet are adequately different to provide a full range for assessment. For complete details of the alternatives, see Chapter II of the Final EIS.

Alternative 1 - The lower White Salmon River would continue to be managed under existing local, state and federal laws. Requirements specified in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act would not be implemented. This alternative would allow the greatest degree of negative impacts on cultural and physical resources. It does not meet the goals of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, but is displayed to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act Regulations to include the alternative of "no action."

Alternative 2 - The goal is to increase the natural character of the river corridor within as large a boundary as the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act allows.

Water quality and instream flows would be increased, and a high level of biological diversity would be restored partially by allowing only natural ecological processes in certain habitats. Cultural resources would be inventoried and evaluated throughout the White Salmon River valley, and all sites within the boundary would be protected.

River recreation would be managed to maintain low levels of crowding and high levels of naturalness. A permit system would limit use to 1988 levels. No recreation facilities would be provided other than parking and sanitation at the put-ins and take-outs.

A 400-foot buffer of natural forest would be created on each side of the river which would allow no new residential, commercial, agricultural, or forestry activities, and would eliminate existing agriculture. Outside the buffer, half the existing agricultural fields would become forest, and no new residential or commercial uses would be allowed except in Husum and BZ Corner.

Alternative 3 - The goal is to maintain the current character of the river area within the boundaries currently established.

Water quality would be increased and existing instream flows and the current level of biological diversity would be maintained. Timber harvest would not be allowed in some areas. Vegetation management, including timber harvest, would perpetuate Oregon white oak. Cultural resources would be inventoried inside the boundary on federal lands, and on a voluntary basis on private lands. Higher priority sites would be protected through acquisition.

River recreation would maintain low to moderate crowding, and moderate to high naturalness, using a permit system if needed. Small picnic grounds with adequate parking and sanitation would be provided at the put-ins and take-outs. A few short trails and one longer trail would be provided.

A 200-foot buffer would be created on each side of the river with no new residential, commercial, agricultural, or forestry activities. Outside the buffer, the existing proportions of agricultural and forest acreage would be maintained. Outside Husum and BZ Corner, new residential uses would be very low, clustered on the least critical 5% of the land.

Alternative 4 - The goal is to minimize effects on private landowners by establishing narrow boundaries, while providing minimum levels of protection and enhancement of important river values.

Water quality would be maintained and minimum flows would be established. Biological diversity would decrease even though timber harvest would not be allowed in some areas. Cultural resources

would be inventoried inside the boundary on federal lands, and on a voluntary basis on private lands. Sites would only be acquired if necessary to protect them from imminent threats.

River recreation would create moderate crowding and naturalness, using a permit system if needed. Small picnic grounds would be provided at the put-ins and take-outs, and in a couple of places accessible only from the river. Only a few short trails would be provided.

A 100-foot buffer would be created on each side of the river with no new residential, commercial, agricultural, or forestry activities. Outside the buffer, 25% of existing forest could be changed to agricultural uses. Outside Husum and BZ Corner, new residential uses would be allowed at moderately low density, spread out along the buffer.

Alternative 5 - The goals are to minimize effects on private landowners by establishing narrow boundaries, provide minimum levels of protection and enhancement of important river values, and increase recreation opportunities.

Water quality would be maintained and minimum flows would be established. Biological diversity would decrease even though timber would not be harvested in some areas. Cultural resource surveys would occur only in response to development proposals and sites would normally not be acquired.

River recreation would create moderate to high crowding and moderate naturalness, using a permit system if needed. There would be substantial recreation development, including large picnic grounds at the put-ins and take-outs, two small picnic/rest stops on the river, a public campground on the river, and an extensive trail system.

A 50-150 foot buffer would be created on each side of the river within which no new residential, commercial, agricultural, or forestry activities could occur. Outside the buffer, up to 25% of existing forest acreage could be converted to agricultural uses. Outside Husum and BZ Corner, new residential uses would be clustered at moderate density.

Alternative 6 (The Selected) - The goal is to meet the intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by providing long-term protection and enhancement of the river's OR values and to maintain the rivers character without unduly limiting other uses by private landowners, as long as those uses do not substantially interfere with the public use and enjoyment of the river.

Water quality would be monitored to assure that it meets or exceeds State standards. If water quality should be below State standards, a technical assistance program would be developed to enhance the quality of water. Instream flows would be maintained at existing levels to protect the river's OR values.

The adoption of strong regulations for fish harvest, such as catch and release, barbless hooks, no bait, restricted seasons, would be encouraged to protect fish populations. River recreation would be managed to maintain low to moderate levels of use. Existing capacity would not be increased.

A buffer of generally undisturbed natural vegetation would be established on each side of the river. This buffer would be 200-feet outside the rural centers. Within BZ Corner, the buffer would extend to 20-feet beyond the rim of the gorge and would not exceed 200-feet from the ordinary high water mark (OHWM). In Husum, the buffer would extend to a point 100-feet from the OHWM.

The following table displays some of variables which can be used to compare the alternatives:

Brief Comparison of Alternatives

OUTPUT OR EFFECT	UNIT	ALTER-NATIVE 1	ALTER-NATIVE 2	ALTER-NATIVE 3	ALTER-NATIVE 4	ALTER-NATIVE 5	ALTERNATIVE 6
Total Area Within Boundary	Acres	NA	2,464	1,881	626	1,168	1,874
Average Area per River Mile	Acres	NA	320	245	81	150	244
Average Width of Boundary, Each Side	Feet	NA	1,320	1,008	335	625	1,004
Width of Buffer, Each Side	Feet	50	400	200	100	50-150	200
Probable Federal Fee Ownership	Acres	0	770	600	200	500	1,100
Probable Federal Scenic Easements	Acres	0	1,694	600	300	200	400

5. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY LAW

A. Identify the Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations require that a record of decision specify "the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable" (40 CFR 1505.2).

Alternative 2 is considered to be "environmentally preferable" as defined by the CEQ regulations (causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.) The reasons for this include:

- * It has the largest acreage within the boundaries.
- * It increases water quality and instream flows.
- * It has the largest buffer of natural vegetation.
- * It provides for conversion of all agricultural fields within the buffer and half the agricultural fields outside the buffer to forest.
- * It allows no timber harvest in many ecosystems and prohibits clearcutting.
- * It provides for comprehensive inventories of cultural resources over the greatest acreage as well as providing the greatest protection to potentially the most sites.
- * It reduces whitewater use to 1988 levels.
- * It allows no new residential or commercial development outside the rural centers.

Although Alternative 2 is environmentally preferable, I have selected Alternative 6 because it creates a better balance between protecting and enhancing the White Salmon River's outstandingly remarkable values and allowing other uses, particularly of private land, which do not substantially interfere with protection of those values.

The emphasis of Alternative 2 is to convert this area, which has supported forestry, agricultural, and residential uses for many decades, to an area dominated by natural processes, in which human use and development activities play a much smaller role. Alternative 6 attempts to retain the present character of the area, but provides for improvements in whitewater recreation, cultural resources, water quality (if needed), and biological diversity by focusing on protection and enhancement of late successional vegetative communities and perpetuating Oregon white oak. Its emphasis is generally on preventing changes that might occur because of deteriorating conditions brought about through overuse or overdevelopment.

B. Consistency with the Forest Plan

The land within the White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River is not within the boundary of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. However, since the Gifford Pinchot is the closest national forest, for reporting and other purposes (including the relationship to a National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan), the federal lands (existing and future) within the wild and scenic river boundary (National Forest System lands) are considered to be part of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

For a number of reasons, the White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River was not addressed in the Gifford Pinchot Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). Therefore, at this time, the Management Plan for the White Salmon River stands on its own. When the LRMP for the Gifford Pinchot National Forest is amended or revised, the White Salmon River Management Plan will be incorporated. At that time, consistency between the two plans will be achieved.

C. Suitability for Timber Production

At present there are approximately 45 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands within the existing wild and scenic river boundary. Of these acres, almost all are capable of growing trees at a rate which is suitable for production of commercial crops of timber. In addition to the existing NFS lands, it is expected that considerably more acreage will be acquired and converted to NFS lands. Most of these lands would also be capable of growing commercial crops of trees. Tentatively, these lands would be considered suitable for timber production.

As described earlier, the emphasis for placing lands under the National Forest system is to be able to manage them in a manner consistent with wild and scenic river objectives. This involves protecting the scenery that is visible from the river, and maintaining or enhancing biological diversity, as far as possible, of federal lands within the boundary. This does not mean that timber will never be harvested. But, if timber is harvested, it will be for the purpose of enhancing wild and scenic river values. Timber will not be harvested on any NFS lands solely for the purpose of producing timber. Given this management direction, all NFS lands, even though tentatively suitable for timber production, will be considered not appropriate for production of timber.

D. Clearcutting and Even-aged Management

There will be no clearcutting or even-aged management of timber on National Forest System lands within the boundary of the White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River, except when determined to be the best method to enhance the outstandingly remarkable river values and biological diversity.

E. Vegetative Manipulation

On National Forest System lands within the boundary, vegetation will only be manipulated if needed to protect or enhance wild and scenic river values. Prior to manipulation, the prescriptions will be determined through an environmental analysis, or an environmental impact statement if the effects are significant.

All proposals that involve vegetative manipulation of tree cover for any purposes will comply with the seven requirements found in 36 CFR 219.27(b).

1. Management prescriptions shall be best suited to the multiple-use goals established for the area with impacts considered in the determination.
2. Management prescriptions shall ensure that the lands can be adequately restocked.
3. Management prescriptions shall not be chosen primarily because they will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest output of timber.
4. Management prescriptions shall consider the effects on residual trees and adjacent stands.
5. Management prescriptions shall avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and insure conservation of soil and water resources.
6. Management prescriptions shall provide the desired effect on water quantity and quality, wildlife and fish habitat, regeneration of desired tree species, forage production, recreation use, and esthetic values.
7. Management prescriptions shall be practical in terms of transportation and harvesting requirements, and total cost of preparation, logging, and administration.

6. MITIGATION

Since the main thrust of this Wild and Scenic River Management Plan is to protect and enhance the river's outstandingly remarkable values, there are few potential direct or indirect adverse effects on the physical or biological environment caused by the management plan. Instead, the Plan tends to be the mitigating agent to reduce the adverse effects on the river and its immediate environment of such activities as housing development, timber harvest, recreational use, etc., which are generated outside the Plan.

However, there are some potential adverse effects on the physical and biological environment. These include the effects on soil, vegetation, water quality, etc., from proposed recreation developments (parking, toilets, picnic sites, trails, etc.), and the effects on soil, vegetation, wildlife, etc. of vegetation manipulation needed for the perpetuation of Oregon white oak communities, or to enhance biological diversity (burning, grazing, timber harvest, etc.) Alternative 6 partially eliminates these effects by limiting the development of recreational facilities to those that are essential to enhancing whitewater recreation, which is an outstandingly remarkable value.

Additional direct adverse effects may be created on water quality, soil, vegetation, etc. by commercial and private recreation use allowed in the plan. This has been mitigated by not encouraging dispersed recreation use, and by the direction to limit whitewater boating use to a level which will maintain desired conditions. A use study is currently in process which will help determine what level of use is compatible with maintaining desired conditions. In addition, monitoring the social and physical effects of recreation use, both on the water and on land, is required in the Plan. Monitoring also will take place on many of the activities generated by private land owners to be sure that the restrictions imposed in this Plan are carried out and that the effects of the restrictions are as described in the Plan.

The major area of adverse effects caused by the Plan is on the socio/economic environment. These adverse effects could result from such actions as acquisition of private lands, acquisition of scenic easements which restrict activities on private land, timber not harvested as a result of being on newly acquired lands or restricted through scenic easements, residential housing not built due to density restrictions, roads and bridges not built, water intake facilities not built, the establishment of minimum water flows, land not converted to agricultural fields, limitations on the amount of recreation use which can take place. Such actions could adversely affect employment, the county tax base, availability of housing, the ability to recreate, etc. Although mitigation of these effects is not explicit, mitigation is built into the Plan through the careful consideration given to each restriction on private actions to assure that the impacts are minimized to the level necessary to adequately protect and enhance the river's values as required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

7. MONITORING

A detailed monitoring plan is included as part of the Management Plan. It describes the items to be monitored and the units of measure, suggested methods for monitoring, the frequency at which items will be monitored, and an estimate of the reliability of the information obtained.

The items which will be monitored include the following:

- * The level of protection of sensitive cultural sites.
- * Water quality and quantity.
- * Fish populations and habitat.
- * Amount of various vegetative communities.
- * Population trends of pileated woodpecker.
- * Species on the Region 6 Sensitive Species List.
- * Perceptions of river crowding.
- * Safety of whitewater boating.
- * Conflict among recreation use types (including off-road use of vehicles) and between recreationists and private landowners.
- * Resource damage in dispersed areas caused by recreationists, including off-road use of vehicles.
- * Compliance of developments or activities with Management Plan standards,
- * Character of the river area.

This monitoring plan establishes the amount of allowable variation for each of the items. If exceeded, serious evaluation will be done and strong actions likely will be taken to correct or prevent further change.

8. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this decision may begin 30 calendar days after the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS appears in the Federal Register (40 CFR 1506.10)

Each project identified in the Management Plan, which may cause impact to the environment, will require additional environmental analysis prior to implementation, with the appropriate level of analysis in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and Forest Service requirements.

9. APPEAL RIGHTS

This Decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. A written Notice of Appeal, in duplicate, must be filed with

John F. Butruille, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
P.O. Box 3623
Portland, Oregon 97208

within 90 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in

The Oregonian (Portland, Oregon).

10. CONTACT PERSON

For further information regarding this decision, contact Steve Mellor, Project Manager, USDA Forest Service, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, 902 Wasco Avenue, Suite 200, Hood River, OR 97031, (503) 386-2333.



Arthur J. Carroll, Manager
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

November 22, 1991
Date





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